

The Man Hudson Taylor

18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. 20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:18-20)

INTRODUCTION

Hudson Taylor's spiritual secret is the thrilling story of J. Hudson Taylor and his founding of the China Inland Mission. This account of the great missionary's amazing life has been a soul-searching inspiration to tens of thousands.¹

James Hudson Taylor (1832-1905), born in Barnsley, Yorkshire, England, is often referred to as "the father of modern missions."

This is the testimony of Professor Warneck of this man of faith, "he was a physician...full of the Holy Spirit and of faith, of entire surrender to God and His call, of great self-denial, heartfelt compassion, rare power in prayer, marvelous organizing faculty, energetic initiative, indefatigable perseverance, and of astonishing influence with men, and withal of childlike humility." A man Christians find much to emulate.

After spending time in the study of medicine and theology, Hudson Taylor went to China under the newly formed China Evangelization Society, arriving in Shanghai in 1854. He stressed only prayer and faith in money raising. There he adopted Chinese dress, an important cultural gesture which we could learn from today.

For 6 months he lived in the home of Dr. Medhurst of the London Missionary Society, whose book *China* had helped stir him to go to China.

He spent the years of 1854 to 1860 working in Shanghai, Swatow, and Ningpo. During 1854 to 1855 he carried 10 evangelistic journeys.

Before long, in June of 1857, Taylor resigned from the society which had sent him out and continued as an independent worker. He married Maria J. Dyer, the daughter of a missionary in China, on 20 January 1858 and in 1859 he took charge of a hospital in Ningpo. In 1860 he returned home to England on his first furlough.

It is reported that Taylor spent the next 5 years translating the New Testament into the Ningpo dialect, wrote a book on China, and prayed for missionaries for inland China. His definite planning at Brighton led to the establishment of a society for the evangelization of inland China with his wife and children and sixteen new missionaries. Thus he became the director of the mission and travelled widely in China and Europe in its interest.

In 1869 he exclaimed: "God has made me a new man!" On 23 July 1870 his wife (nee Dyer) died. He returned to China in 1872 with a new wife (nee Faulding) From 1876 through 1878 Taylor conducted widespread evangelistic journeys throughout inland China.

Taylor visited North America for the first time in 1888 at the invitation of the American evangelist D.L. Moody. During his three months there, Taylor challenged large numbers

¹ Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret, Dr. & Mrs. Howard Taylor, Moody Press, Chicago, 1989, vi-xi.

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of Christians to take seriously the claims and challenge of the Great Commission. It is reported that “as a result of these meetings fourteen men and women packed their bags and followed Taylor to China” and “the North American branch of the China Inland Mission was born.”

Much as we emulate Hudson Taylor’s life, he had his problems like any human. He was sick for much of his life. He lost his wife, Maria, and their third child to cholera. Famine and disease often swept through China. Taylor fell and was paralyzed from a spinal injury during the winter of 1874-1875. This was his lowest ebb as he laid paralyzed in England. He experienced great trials and doubts during his life.

Yet, in spite of all this trouble he never gave up. “Even so great men great losses should endure,” (Shakespeare, Julius Ceasar, Acts IV, Scene III). But I say: Truly great men great losses must endure, but not one minute more than is absolutely necessary! Great men, as they endure great suffering, are reaching down into the depths of their being, marshaling greater energy even as they reach down, to rise again victorious. Truly, “great men” know they must depend on God for their strength and direction. Hudson Taylor was indeed one of God’s great warriors.

Some of the very important emphases of Hudson Taylor’s missions efforts were: (1) He took steps to identify with the people of China. (2) He believed that mission should be directed on the field, not from some home base in another country. (3) He lived depending on God alone for supplies, with scrupulous efficiency in administration. (4) He did everything he could to help deepen the Christian life in the home churches as a sure means of encouraging missionary vocations. He retired from the mission in 1901. At his death in 1905 at Changsha (the capital of the last province opened to the Gospel), there were 205 stations with 849 missionaries and 125,000 Chinese Christians in the China Inland Mission.

Daniel W. Bacon, the United States director of Overseas Missionary Fellowship said in 1987, “Taylor has reminded us that ultimately missions in God’s work and can only be done God’s way. Faith is not an option but the basis by which God’s power and resources are made available to His servants. Our generation needs to hear afresh that God does answer prayer, that He is utterly faithful to His Word.” Bacon went on to say that “Hudson Taylor’s life is also a continual challenge for us to look out on the “inlands” of our world where multitudes are still untouched or neglected.” I add we must look to the continual challenge of our inner cities!

“Much of the church today is asleep”, observed his son Howard, “It desperately needs to be reawakened to God’s glorious call to world evangelization given in the Final, or Great, Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). This is a call to love individual human beings not just cities or nations, but the people who live in them. We must realize at one and the same time what a great privilege and great responsibility it is to be commissioned – as every Christian is – to share God’s love and grace with our fellow sojourners here on planet Earth (2 Corinthians 5:17-20).

Questions:

- (1) Has today’s generation of Christians lost their spiritual fervor to fulfill the Great Commission? Explain your answer.
- (2) How can Christians be stirred to reach the unsaved?